

# The Dance of Life

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*2 Samuel 6:12 “Now King David was told, “The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God.” So David went to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.”*

This verse is part of the story where King David brings the Ark of the Covenant to the City of David, or ancient Jerusalem. In those days, the Ark of the Covenant was believed to be the actual place where God abided. So as the procession carried the Ark into the city David did not enter with the expected dignity of a king, but instead was leaping, spinning, and dancing.

David was ecstatic. He knew that whoever he was, whatever he had, whatever station in life

he had gained, he owed it all to God. All the goodness and favor bestowed upon him poured from the loving kindness of his Father.

So, as he brought the Ark forward he worshipped God not only with his voice, the sounds of instruments, his whole heart, but also his entire body. King David threw off his embroidered and gilded royal robes, set aside his royal stature for the moment, and as a Child of God in a simple white robe, he danced his love, gratitude, and joy for the Divine One. It must have been an epic exhibition of unfettered affection for God.

And of course, this unfiltered display was not understood or looked upon by others with affinity. In fact, his wife Michal, was utterly ticked off and as she looked upon David from a window, we are told that “she despised him in her heart”.

This story is not as much about David dancing, as it is about his displays of worship and gratitude toward God. Dancing is a metaphor for living. We can live our life, that precious gift from God, with abandon, gratitude, and exuberance, or we can be indifferent and expressionless.

Of course, we all have different personalities; we all respond and act from an inner nature dictated largely by our genetics. But we also have control over much of how we behave. Regardless of how our DNA directs us we choose to be joyful and grateful or not. We choose to be compassionate, loving, and tolerant or not.

These choices are influenced by our egos and our fears. For instance: I am reserved publicly because that is how I am wired; my DNA does

not allow me to easily show my emotions. But I know joy is still within me; fun and boyish boisterousness is still within me, but I typically choose not to allow it to express.

Why is that? Is it all because of my internal hardwiring? I don't think so. Much of my reactions are dampened because of my fears and thoughts of what others might think. My ego tells me: Patrick, you are a minister, for goodness sakes; a father, an adult, a professional business person, and an educated man – so how can you just be goofy and let all your feelings and emotions run amok? Tone it down; it is not appropriate to display emotions. It is better to remain stoic; that looks more professional.

It is one thing to be quiet and reserved, but are we behaving that way because we are allowing other people's reactions to control us? Are our

fears of what others may think of us robbing us of the joy and delight that God wants for us? Even grief – grief is healthy, normal, vital. Are we trying to put on a strong face because others are saying we should? Man up, Patrick; real men don't cry.

Are we listening to others, or to convention, or to cultural edicts that suppress our joy and love, anger and disappointment? There are times when anger is the appropriate response. Now, we don't need to curse and cause harm to anyone. But to tell someone that you don't like the way that they treated you is healthy.

Not so healthy is to complain angrily about things that are out of anyone's control or that they were not involved with. Yes, we all know people who just like to complain; they use it as a technique for starting conversations. That is how some people dialogue with others. If that is

you, may I be so bold as to say: it is unattractive. Complaining does not draw people to you. Complaining is all about you; it is ego based. Offering solutions is other-based.

We are going to experience living, as dancers experience dancing. There are going to be glorious times, but as our daughter Rebecca, who danced professionally on a cruise line for eight years has told us, there are going to be times when your shoe gets caught on a stair and the heel is torn off ... yet you must go on dancing. There are going to be times when one dancer throws you and your partner drops you; but you go on dancing. Costume changes and malfunctions are going to create chaos. You're going to be late for entrances. Other people are going to get sick and you are going to have to re-block everything and try to remember the choreography. At other times you will just have to make it as you go.

But most of the time the dance is beautiful, rewarding, and everything is flowing smoothly. For the greater part, we are going to enjoy the dance, the movement, the expression, the joy of interacting with others and creating something magnificent.

David danced without thought to others or his ego. He didn't dance to impress anyone; he danced out of gratitude and joy. God wants us to dance; God wants us to have life abundantly.

Personally, I'm not much of a dancer. When I was a kid I was taller than most and gangly. As an aside, Mary and I were singing to a song while coming back from Monterey. She commented that I sang a pretty impressive low note as I added the bass part to a folk song. She said that she always dreamed about marrying a short, stocky baritone. Funny! She ended up

with a tall, thin, tenor. But then I said that as I get older, my voice is getting lower, I am getting fatter and shorter. The older I get the more I become the man of her dreams!

But when I was a kid I was tall and skinny, and not too coordinated. I was athletic, but not graceful. I remember those school dances where all the boys are on one side and the girls on the other. It was only the really outgoing popular boys that were ever on the dance floor. None of the rest of us guys knew the first thing about dancing.

It was all over our faces: we were afraid to ask a girl to dance for many reasons. First, we couldn't dance, so we didn't want to look foolish by stepping on her feet or just looking like a crippled flamingo. And second, we were afraid the girl would say, "No". Maybe she wouldn't like me even enough to dance. There



would have been nothing more embarrassing than being rejected in public ... with everyone watching.

And I know now, that the girls were probably thinking something similar: Will anyone ask me to dance? Am I attractive enough? If someone does ask me, will I look foolish on the dance floor? Will he make fun of me and talk about me to his friends? The fear was just so great. So, girls danced with each other and guys huddled in clusters watching, because boys didn't dance with boys.

Dancing with God is much different; there is no fear of others. It is only our past fears, from imagined or real experiences, that keep us from getting out on the dance floor with God. God always has a hand stretched out, inviting us to join in a Spirit-filled romp. And God knows all the steps and can lead or follow flawlessly. A

good dance partner can make even the poorest of us dancers look. I look back on the video of Rebecca and I dancing at her wedding, and I looked passably good, because she is so good a partner.

God is the best dance partner. When we are moving with God, we are at our best. God will never drop us and will somehow make it look great if we stumble or step on a toe. What joy we experience to be moving in harmony to the music, in perfect time and step with our partner. So it is in life. When we let God lead us, the results are full of joy and fulfillment and true satisfaction of accomplishment.

Life is like a dance: inviting, full of promise, and yet so frightening and easy to avoid. Yes, there are things to learn. We can trust our partner and learn to lead or follow at the right times. We can engage the moment and become

more confident in ourselves and our partner as a team until we are moving in unison, gracefully and without tension. We can learn to listen and move in time with the beat, enjoying the expression of music through our bodies.

The saddest part of being afraid is that we so easily move to dismissal of an opportunity. Whether it is in dancing, serving, singing, painting, job promotions, speaking to others, dating, or acquiring new friends – we can choose to let our fears dictate the joy and satisfaction we have in this life.

Yes, we are going to experience life in its entirety: the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly. And when we have the opportunity to strut and march and look down our nose at those who don't see the world through our eyes, and who don't agree with us or look like us, I pray that we will find joy in knowing that every

one of those individuals is as worthy and loved as we are by our beloved Christ. I hope we choose to embrace the dance of Life.

There is a popular phrase that has been attributed erroneously to Mark Twain, Satchell Paige, William Purkey, and an anonymous Buddhist Monk. But this wonderful lesson is credited to songwriters Susanna Clark and Richard Leigh in their song, 'Come From the Heart':

Sing like no one is listening.  
Love like you've never been hurt.  
Dance like nobody's watching,  
and live like it's heaven on earth.

As cheesy as this all sounds, it really comes down to this: we can either dance at weddings and have a great time, or we can remain seated at our table watching others have a good time,

using the worn-out line “I can’t dance,” as an excuse to eliminate a little piece of joy from our lives. Jeremiah 31:4 tells us that after we have been broken down by life God will rebuild us, and we will again take up tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful.

It is my prayer that after we have wallowed in the dregs and mire of all those unavoidable times we’ve been rejected, hurt and disappointed, that we will again lift our eyes to the Light of God and feel the joy of Grace coursing through us. We are told in Ecclesiastes 3:4 that there is “*a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance*”. I pray that we will make the choice to be an unencumbered, grateful, delighted Child of God, and throw off the robes of convention, fear, and ego and dance as David danced – with impassioned unrestraint, and with all our heart,

soul, strength, and with all our mind. I hope  
you dance.

Let us pray....